

SENATOR ABBOUD: Yes, Mr. President and colleagues, I rise to support the amendment as well. I feel that with the amendments that we've just recently attached and the amendment, adding it onto the bill, I feel it will be better for the workers of this state by providing a better work environment and a safer work environment as well as providing them with an increase in the amount of unemployment benefits that they will receive if for whatever reason they are not employed by their employer. So for those two reasons, increased safer work places as well as increased benefits, I feel we should support the amendment and advance the bill. Thank you.

SPEAKER WITHEM: Thank you, Senator Abboud. Any further discussion on the Hall amendment? Seeing none, Senator Hall, do you have a closing?

SENATOR HALL: Thank you, Mr. President and members, again I rise to urge the body to adopt the amendment which will become LB 286. It is a compromise reached by both sides in this issue, that being labor and management, in essence, to say that we recognize that there is a need to increase this benefit for those people who are out of work. We had the luxury of in Nebraska having an unemployment rate of 2.2 percent in November. It is an unheard of rate across the country. People are envious about the economy that we have in this state. We also have a trust fund balance that is just shy of \$170 million. Again, that's \$100 million over the nine and a half years ago when I came into the Legislature and first started carrying these types of bills. The fund has been handled in a very rightful manner on the part of the Department of Labor. They made some good judgements in terms of the investments as have the folks who invest the money on their behalf. There has been some very, I think, although I don't always agree with them, strong efforts put forth on the part of the business community to make sure that folks who aren't eligible don't receive the benefits, but at this point in time as I think we should have done a few years ago but we're now there and I'm glad we're at the point of being in agreement to do something for those workers who are out there who need that bridge to get from job to job merely to pay their bills so that we don't find them in a deeper hole, so we don't find them coming to us for not unemployment, but for welfare, and I think that this is money that is well spent to help bridge that gap from job to job for those people who are out of work. I would urge that the body would adopt the amended version of